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November 1939

What Social Workers Say About Social Workers

Elizabeth Cosgrove

Field Work for Research Students

Saya Schwartz

Notes on Chapters and Their Personnel

Volume XXI Number 2

REFERENCES rank high among social work nuisances. They are often a problem to the applicant who may not be certain what particular purposes they are to serve, which persons he might name would give most adequately the information desired, or what sources he should suggest for a reliable rounded picture of his capacities. The reference-writer faces the same problems in reverse: Why was he chosen by the candidate, how shall he deal with his own inability to answer questions outside the sphere of his knowledge of the candidate, which of the various things he might say would be most pertinent, what reliance can he place on the understanding and discrimination of the reference-reader?

One interesting possibility is suggested by Miss Cosgrove's article: it might be illuminating if some of the chapters were to discuss and report on the difficulties experienced by those members who have had to select persons for reference and those members who have had to answer requests for references. References are one of the terminal points of the evaluation process. If social workers cease to take references seriously, what alternatives are they choosing?

FIELD WORK training for social work students who are not preparing for direct service to clients has been and continues to be a problem for schools of social work and agency field work centers. How for example is social research to realize its responsibilities as *social work* research? How is the field of social work to develop research personnel adequate to the important functions which social work research must assume? Saya Schwartz describes the development in the public welfare agency of field work for administrative research in terms which should be provocative of clearer understanding of an educational problem the solution of which is of deep import to all of social work.

EACH year more members of the AASW are exchanging their former impatience with the creaking machinery and labored programs in their chapters for an experimental interest in finding out how they can operate a new and peculiar agency and gear it to vital purposes. From time to time THE COMPASS will print notes on chapters that may be stimulating to members who have discovered that running a chapter offers them an opportunity for creating an agency of their own.

Contents

Article	*Page*
What Social Workers Say About Social Workers — ELIZABETH COSGROVE	3
Field Work for Research Students in a Public Welfare Agency — SAYA S. SCHWARTZ	7
The Study of Education for the Public Social Services: A Progress Report — MARION HATHWAY	10
Notes About Chapters	12
Personnel Amendment to the Social Security Act	14
Civil Service Examination Notice	14
Material for Committee Study	15
Regional Conferences	16
Chapter Food Stamp Study	16
American Social Workers in Service Abroad	19
Proposals for Research on Relief Problems	20

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What Social Workers Say About Social Workers and How They Say It

By Elizabeth Cosgrove

References constitute a professional problem to job-seekers, agency executives, schools of social work, and membership committees of the AASW as well as to civil service commissions. This article by Elizabeth Cosgrove, Senior Examiner of the U. S. Civil Service Commission, is a reminder that references continue to be a practical necessity in personnel selection which it is important we meet by learning to make them more useful to all concerned. Her suggestions and criticisms should be provocative of renewed interest in references as evaluations.

FOR many years social workers and others have been helpful in the work of the United State Civil Service Commission. In connection with rating examinations for positions in the professional grades the Commission has asked for information regarding the personality and competence of applicants. Numerous questions have been asked by those who write references as to the kind of information that is most helpful. In response to these questions an attempt will be made here to record some observations on present practices and to request widespread participation in analyzing the problem of writing references. The observations that will be recorded have led to suggestions that may make the writing of references a less difficult but more thoughtful experience for those who write them and more helpful both to the applicants about whom they are written and to the agencies in the Federal departments which may or may not be called upon to appoint those applicants.

The Commission uses a printed form which is sent to employers, to persons whose names are given by applicants and sometimes to others who might have information about applicants. This form includes twenty-three questions designed to bring out facts and opinions about applicants with a minimum of effort on the part of the person filling it out. There is a sentence in the introductory paragraph which reads: "If you prefer to cover these essential points in a letter to the Commission it will be entirely satisfactory to do so; however, this form should be returned with your letter." If these forms are received by the Commission within three weeks after their mailing, the rating of an examination will be greatly expedited; however, if they are necessarily delayed, they will be considered if they come in later. The Commission welcomes concrete suggestions for the improvement of this form, inasmuch as there is no known formula for eliciting a maximum amount of information in a minimum amount of time about many thousands of applicants from a nation-wide area.

A mimeographed sheet giving the descriptions of duties of the positions for which the examination is being held is now being enclosed with the reference forms. If such a sheet is not enclosed, the Commission should be notified at once. Since many applicants file for a number of examinations in approximately the same field, the Commission attempts to use, insofar as possible, the same replies in order to conserve the time of those who write references.

Before proceeding with a record of observations, and suggestions that flow from them, it might be profitable to make a statement about what appears to be a fairly general misinterpretation on the part of applicants as well as on the part of those who write references. In securing information about applicants for a professional position in the Federal service, the Commission desires to do more than merely verify employment. Three facts might be kept in mind in relation to this very important aspect of examinations: 1—An *evaluation* of a professional worker and not simply a recommendation is sought; 2—All statements are considered in strict confidence; 3—Information is reviewed by professional examiners, the quality of whose evaluation of that information must necessarily bear a direct relationship to the articulateness and sincerity with which the reference is written.

In general, applicants give as sources of information about themselves the names of persons who would be most likely to make favorable comments on their ability. If those persons given as references have had an opportunity to know the applicant's work and

character such a selection is a wise one, but if they reply in general terms, not much helpful information is secured in regard to his professional skills. Apparently many applicants give names of persons as references without first securing the consent of those persons. An example of this practice is the applicant who gives the name of the executive of a large association of which the applicant is a member; in many instances the executive does not even know the applicant in a casual way. Does this practice indicate bad manners on the part of the applicant, or lack of ability to think clearly, or ambition?

Dentists, lawyers, physicians, insurance agents, housewives, and undertakers occasionally give analytical statements about the character of applicants who have given their names as reference but there seems to have been no instance in which they were able to make any evaluation of professional skills or attitudes. Young people just out of college sometimes have a difficult time in listing five names for references but there are many who can and do give names of teachers and professional social workers whom they have come to know either as students or in a brief period of experience. The only restrictions placed by the Commission upon the list of given references is that it shall not contain the names of relatives, or the names of employers and immediate supervisors already listed by the applicant in his statement of his employment experience. If a group of given references is composed largely of those who know little about the applicant, it may mean that the applicant does not know his professional colleagues or that he is not certain that they would think highly of his ability. It seems reasonable to assume that the bases on which references are selected constitute to some extent at least one of the measures of an applicant's judgment.

Incorrect or obsolete addresses sometimes rob an application of valuable information and care should be taken that all addresses are recorded accurately as of the date of the application. In listing the names and addresses of employers and supervisors as well as those of given references, it is important that applicants find out, whenever possible to do so, the present exact addresses of all persons listed. It is not uncommon to find listed the names of persons now dead. Where such information is available to the applicant, the name of some other person in the organization should be given, or at least an indication should be given of the fact that the former employer or supervisor is dead.

Responses received from social workers and teachers have been, on the whole, carefully thought out and definitely indicative of interest in a good examining process. The extravagantly praising type of reference is unusual and there are definite indications that many reference writers have attempted to do a conscientious piece of work in making an evaluation of the applicant about whom they are writing. These observations are based on a review of thousands of papers seen in the last three years. The schools of social work, perhaps because they are closer to the problem of selection through evaluation than are some administrators, have developed some interesting procedures. One school has a mimeographed sheaf of material about each graduate, containing statements about his personality, skills and details of his school program including field work placements. These statements have been made with such care that one could grade a group of students from the same school in what might be considered proper sequence in relation to the abilities of each individual.

A more general practice among the schools' references, however, is to say that their students have had a well-rounded program, that they are excellent material and that they would be able to perform very well. It may be that large number of graduates are as good as these general statements make them sound, but for purposes of competition with others from the same school and from other schools, it would be helpful if the faculties of the schools could work out some plan whereby they could supply an analysis of students' abilities and have a report of that analysis available whenever called up to supply it as, indeed, they must be called upon by others than this Commission. Another problem in connection with school references is the faculty member who places check marks in the blocks marked "High Grade," "Excellent judgment," and then, in answer to the question as to whether or not the applicant is fitted for the position, answers simply, "No," without giving reasons.

Several agencies operating in a large area and employing large staffs have worked out some valuable procedures for reporting on the experience and competence of personnel. These reports usually come in the form of letters. They are factual as to dates of employment, salaries, pay roll titles and description of duties. They give in addition to such useful information a description of the agency's evaluation of the applicant, based on statements from supervisors or executives. By having such a centralized source of information, an examining group is able to formu-

late some basis of comparison in regard to the abilities of individuals from the same agency and to interpret the language and shades of differentiation which the central source gives about a number of applicants.

In answering questions which involve opinions, the reference writer might follow advisedly the technique of Baby Snooks of radio fame after a statement has been made and say to himself, "Why, Daddy?" and see if he can do a better job on the answer than the bewildered daddy does!

On a form that is used for all types of examinations there will obviously be some questions that are not expected to be answered by all, and each reference writer should decide for himself which those are. It is by far the better practice to leave a blank than to fill in all spaces when there is no basis in experience to answer accurately or fairly.

In making statements, either by placing check marks in the blocks provided on the reference forms, or by writing letters, it is advisable to place the major emphasis on the professional skills, personality and attitudes rather than on the minimum qualities that might be expected in a professional worker, such as honesty, sobriety and integrity. It is interesting to note that some simple familiar words, used frequently by many people, begin to take on different shades of meaning when they are used in letters of reference. For example, the word "integrity" is sometimes used in comparative degrees, without explanation. The word "loyalty" is used so often that it is easy to think it has universally accepted meaning but on comparison of its use by one writer with that of another, one is sometimes at a loss to know why it is used and just what the author means to imply. Occasionally it seems to be open to the interpretation that the applicant is always in agreement with the person who writes the reference. At other times, a worker is said to be "loyal" to an organization.

When words that have varying connotations are used, it is advisable to make clear, in explanatory paragraphs, the intended meaning and breadth of application of the words. For example, it is good practice to give illustrations of the types of situations which led up to the use of a word in describing a particular applicant. There is no need to comment here on the extreme power of words in general, but it might be well to emphasize the importance of choosing words in writing references. When engaged in such an evaluation the intent of the writer should be not merely that the reference be understood, but that it be impossible to misunderstand it. Another specific recommendation in this connection is that the matter of describing professional qualifications be considered of sufficient importance to warrant a quest for definitive terminology.

The generally favorable reference does not constitute quite so much a source of questioning as some condemnatory references. One educator made a statement to the effect that he vaguely remembered the applicant as a student of his ten years ago and had had no first hand knowledge of her since then; and then he proceeded to describe her immaturity, incompetence and lack of responsibility. A statement as to an applicant's ability to get along with people is of no value unless the settings and situations on which the writer based his opinions are fully described; many references are conscientious to the utmost degree about supplying such descriptions while others will not reply to further questions on the subject. It would seem to be an obligation on a person who makes unfavorable comments to give the rationale of those comments, as objectively as it is possible to do so.

There is a group of general comments indicating the personal likes and dislikes of the writers that deserves some attention here. One teacher writes of a graduate student of eight years ago: "This work was taken so long ago that very little emphasis should be given it." Another teacher wrote of a recent graduate of her school that he is a hazy thinker, the quantity of his work is below average, that he blinks his eyes and that he is not particularly well-fitted for the position for which he was applying. Another person who evidently likes unusually tall men, notes "physical disability as to stature" when the applicants do not measure to the height she desires, even though they are taller than is required for admission to the army.

This matter of physical disabilities is one that needs some explanation. Each applicant is required to make a sworn statement as to any physical defect, disease or disability. Such statements are verified by the Commission and before appointment physical examinations are, of course, made. However, those who write references can be of considerable help in commenting on any condition which is perhaps of minor importance from the standpoint of actual physical ability but entirely relevant in relation to certain types of positions. Speech difficulties, for example, may be a real liability in one type of position but not in another. A full statement about any condition that is known to the writer of the reference is of help to the applicant.

There is another type of reference that leaves one in doubt as to its meaning. The writer, intent on being as objective as possible, sometimes ends by saying nothing meaningful about an applicant; in other words, he seems to lean over backwards in trying to be fair. There is the possibility that this type of reference is designed to give the impression that the author does not want to say some undesirable things that he may know.

And then there is the person who has been asked to send a reference because he was an employer or because he was at some time in position to know the work of the applicant well, but who fails to reply. It would not be reasonable to penalize an applicant in any way for this omission but it is strongly urged that all possible cooperation be given the Commission or other inquirers about an applicant's qualifications by replying to all requests for references.

Although there are many types of professional positions for social workers in the federal service, each having special requirements, there are some personal qualifications required for many of the federal positions that may not be of the utmost importance in state and local organizations. For example, positions in some of the departments for which the Commission holds examinations require the ability to adapt one's self readily to the manners and customs of widely separated geographical areas. The individual who has never been employed in more than one city or small community may not have had an opportunity to demonstrate flexibility of this type and if the author of a reference knows of specific instances where the applicant has indicated potentialities in this direction, it is well to make a statement to that effect.

Administrative experience of the type that is frequently required in some examinations is considered essential as qualifying experience for admission to some of the higher grades of an examination but it is how an individual has developed in that administrative responsibility that is important. Some positions, for example, do not need people who can just continue to supervise and direct others in their work, but require, rather, people who can help state and other governmental units to develop and supervise their own services. This means that an applicant must have an awareness of what professional programs are necessary but must also have enough self-restraint combined with leadership so that in consulting with others he can point direction and accomplish actual participation rather than tell or show others how a program must be administered.

It is difficult to know just how information of these various types suggested can be elicited by the use of any form. A form for reference has come to be one kind of insurance of getting a maximum number of returns in any examination. Consequently it seems advisable that those who are sufficiently acquainted with and interested in an applicant, and who are desirous of having well qualified social workers selected for the federal service, amplify and experiment with the present form and make recommendations for its improvement. The Commission desires to enlist the interest and cooperation of those who are asked to write references about applicants on civil service examinations; asks that information given be complete and accurate and that it be related primarily to facts concerning the applicant's professional experience, his personality, his professional skills, his demonstrated abilities and what the author of the reference believes to be his potentialities. Applicants are asked to give the names of persons who know most about their professional competence and to give current addresses.

It would be stressing the obvious to give reasons why a professional examiner has not attempted in an informal, intimate communication to colleagues to discuss the philosophy of writing references. That is an area in which the schools, the professional associations, research workers and administrators are continuously thoughtful. All that can be said here is that references are of indispensable value as one aid in the selection of personnel. The United States Civil Service Commission appreciates the sharing of this responsibility by professional groups. It requests additional study, supplementing its own research on the subject, of the best ways in which the special abilities, aptitudes, and potentialities of applicants can be measured in relation to each other. It urges all those who have done any planning in this field to send in suggestions as to methodology. It takes this opportunity to acknowledge the assistance that has already been given by many individuals in many parts of the country.

The Social Work Publicity Council has recently published a document of interest to chapter committees on interpretation. Its title is "Local Publicity Councils and Committees." * While there is considerable emphasis on the machinery of organization for local councils, the material on program content is full of timely suggestions.

* Available through the SWPC, 130 East 22d Street, New York City, at 75¢ a copy.

Field Work for Research Students in a Public Welfare Agency

By Saya S. Schwartz

THE need of research in social welfare and of provision for it as an arm of effective administration makes the problem of education for research workers increasingly important. Saya Schwartz, Administrative Assistant for Research, Department of Public Assistance, Philadelphia County Board, discusses supervised field work for research students in this paper which was presented at a meeting of the Joint Committee on Relief Statistics at the National Conference of Social Work, June 1939.

You will recall that the preceding paper was entitled "Do We Train Research Workers in Schools of Social Work?" Please note that the title was expressed in the form of a question. It is true that Dr. Clague in his excellent presentation of the subject did not stress the question mark. On the contrary, his positive and convincing statement indicated the place which schools of social work hold in a research training program, and presented the reasons underlying the concern of these schools with such training. He maintained that knowledge and understanding of the field in which the research techniques are applied are essential to competence as a research worker, and that for the field of social research in a welfare program such knowledge is most readily acquired in schools of social work—schools which are specifically equipped to instruct the student as to the background, theories and techniques of the entire field of social work. His approach also presupposed the thesis that these schools legitimately undertake the training for case work and social welfare administration, and I believe that we should find little opposition to this assumption. However, when the function of the schools with respect to research training is considered, no such unanimity of opinion is experienced. In fact, many persons, including some of our colleagues, frequently question whether schools of social work should be given any preference over other schools in the academic training of research students for the welfare field. They maintain that the practice of research and statistics requires a technical knowledge and skill which can be attained in any educational institution, and that once such skill has been gained a person can apply it in any field, whether it be research in banking, insurance, labor problems or public assistance.

However much the question of the appropriate educational background for social research may still be open to argument, it seems to be generally accepted that training and experience in a welfare agency is an absolute essential for competent performance in our field. It follows, therefore, that public and private agencies should assume the responsibility for the training of research students, as they have already done in many instances for students in case work, and should for that purpose make available all the facilities at their command.

The problem of field training for all students of social work, inclusive of research students, involves the school, the student, and the private or public welfare agency. Upon their satisfactory inter-relationships depends the ultimate development of the student, and, in a less direct but no less real sense, the evolution of the school and the agency.

The present success and future contribution of the school is necessarily a function of its present and future teaching staff. Since the field of social work is, relatively, a new development, and has moreover, recently experienced a period of mushroom growth, it is not surprising that there exists at present a dearth of trained teachers to staff the faculties of the social work schools. Many of the most efficient and most experienced persons in the field have been called to fill important governmental or state positions, and are therefore, not available as instructors, except, possibly, on an occasional lecture basis. Too often, therefore, courses are given by men and women who are products of graduate schools and university faculties and who,

though highly trained in academic subjects, are completely lacking in personal experience in actual agency work. Furthermore, even if the school is fortunate enough to have upon its staff successful social research workers who possess a wealth of individual experience upon which to draw for the training and stimulation of students, it still frequently happens that the school lacks the facilities to provide within its own walls opportunities for practical application, on the part of students, of their acquired knowledge.

The social agency also has its drawbacks as an independent training field for students. It contends typically with the two-fold compulsion of operating with a personnel often limited by inadequate funds and therefore inferior in numbers as well as in training and experience, and of operating under pressure to distribute services and funds quickly and fairly. Only when an exceptionally favorable liaison exists between school and agency, is it possible for the agency to achieve the type of cooperative supervision of field training which will be of benefit to the student.

Between these two institutions—the school and the agency—stands the student in need of research training. Where is he to receive this training and by whom is it to be directed? An important question, deserving of a thoughtful answer, since, upon the successful training of the present generation of students in social research work, depends the future of both schools and agencies.

It is my position that at present the only possible field training ground for students of all types of social work is the social agency. The school or university may be more or less adequately equipped to provide the student with the tools of his trade—acquaintance with the broad fields of human knowledge, a certain background of culture and educational poise, a detailed body of information regarding the specific fields of his interest. However, at this stage of the student's development, he is like a small boy with a complete set of new and shiny tools—he has everything he needs with which to build and create, but lacks the skill, the knowledge, and perhaps the ability to make use of these implements. So our student, though well supplied with figures, theories and generalizations, is virtually untried in the practical utilization of this knowledge. It is no more reasonable to expect the graduate student in social work to function successfully as a social worker without field work, than it would be to expect the fledgling doctor to enter private practice without the important year of internship, or the young lawyer without the apprenticeship in the established law office. It, therefore, becomes the function of the social agency to furnish the proving field for the embryonic social worker's skills.

More especially is the agency needed for the trial flights of the research student in social work. For research is, by its very nature, something which cannot be taught in classrooms, cannot be acquired from reading, cannot be mastered by any method other than that of individual trial and error. The research student can be guided in the development of his techniques for a short distance along the road, but eventually he must stand or fall by his own completely independent efforts.

Before entering upon a specific discussion of field training in an agency, I should like to point out the distinctions arising between training on the job, on the one hand, and supervised field work of students, on the other. In the former situation, we are breaking in a member of the staff newly appointed to fill a definite and specific need of the agency. Our primary responsibility is to the agency, and our main objective is to see that there is as little interference with the routine as possible. Our concern with the employee is to see that he learns a specific and prescribed job or set of techniques as thoroughly and quickly as possible. We desire to cut down the training period as much as is reasonable in order that he shall most speedily and adequately fill his niche in the coordinated activity of the department. While it should be our endeavor to avoid placing any obstacles in the way of the worker's wider conception and understanding of his job, of the relating of his function to the total agency organization, and of any self-initiated improvement and development of his work, we must reiterate that our main accountability is to the agency.

The situation with respect to the field training of a student is quite different. While we wish to let him have the full experience ordinarily accruing to the position which he is, for the time being, occupying, we are not grooming him for a particular role, nor is the rest of the department dependent to any great extent upon his output of work for smooth functioning. Inasmuch as he takes an active, though temporary, part in the organized work of the department, our responsibility to the agency demands that we make sure that the work is efficiently performed. We are, moreover, accountable to the school, not only in our capacity as appraisers and evaluators of the student's abilities, but also as collabora-

tors in the planning of a unified program which shall integrate, intimately and minutely, field training, school work and class room material. In the last analysis, however, our real responsibility is to the student himself. We must orient him with respect to the entire program and give him a comprehensive understanding of the field as well as a thorough grounding in research techniques. We must initiate him into the intricacies of research in actual progress, but at the same time we must not unduly subject him, during this learning process, to the pressure frequently experienced by the research staff under compulsion of output. We must, above all, see that he is placed for his period of field work under the supervision of a fully trained person.

Having now established the distinction between the supervisory function in directing training on the job as contrasted with the training of a research student, let us now outline the actual mode of procedure which we shall adopt in the latter case. When a student enters our agency for field work in research, he is shortly taken on a tour of the agency conducted by a supervisor, who explains the function of each division, and traces the complete routine of all agency activities from the first contact with the applicant through the various departments to the final disposition of the case. He is shown the functioning of the financial, legal and industrial offices, treatment of restitutions and appeals, administrative, personnel, and executive routines. This brief acquaintance with agency procedures is supplemented by reading of policy manuals, state and county bulletins, local and general publications and by conference discussions with the supervisor on problems which have interested him and upon which he desires further enlightenment. Following this preliminary ground work, the student is led gradually from the routine statistical collection of data to a minor research problem, such as is always in progress in the department. We regard it as important that the student shall at some time during his field training take part in every step of an agency study from the inception of the study through the discussions and decisions regarding the issues involved, the preparation of the schedules, instructions to the visitors or persons designated to collect the information required, summarization and treatment of the data, and finally, the drawing of conclusions, and the preparation of the report. If it is at all possible, it is particularly desirable that the student should himself participate in the collection of the original data. In this way, he should learn something of the technique of interviewing, as well as of the selective transcription of pertinent information. He should, in addition, become aware of the difficulties encountered by the staff members in the course of the fact-gathering, and thereby become more tolerant and understanding of omissions and discrepancies in their records. Moreover this experience should give him an insight into the significances and implications of the study which he could never attain by the mere reading of schedules and computation of statistical measures.

It is also advantageous for the student to take part in committee meetings, there to learn for himself the kind of discussions, arguments, adjustments and decisions that preface the initiation of the study, critically review its operation, analyze its conclusions, and prescribe the form of its final presentation.

If the supervisor can conveniently plan to have the student present at conferences with persons from other social agencies, state and government bureaus, or community organizations, this should be arranged. We have found that this has proven a most enlightening experience to our students, making more graphic to them the relationships of social groups, their inter-dependence upon common pools of information, and their final responsibilities toward the general public.

In following the above procedures, it is important that the research student should, at the outset of his field training, be brought to realize certain limitations which the research worker in a welfare agency is compelled to face. Fresh from the class room, the student is prepared to find research regarded by the agency as a primary function, and conducted in the meticulous, logical and scientific manner of the laboratory. To his surprise, he discovers that research studies are often by-products of agency procedures, that they are conducted, frequently under considerable pressure, to meet sudden, specific questions or demands, and that they are sometimes inquiries under what appear to him to be quite variable conditions, rather than the detailed, controlled experiments of his academic experience. Let us illustrate his dilemma by reference to a study of the effect of a change in the size of visitors' caseloads on efficient administration. Ideally, experimental control involves the elimination of all variable elements affecting the factor under study; in other words, only the caseload *size* should be changed in the set-up of the experiment, while every other influence

(Continued on page 17)

The Study of Education for the Public Social Services: A Progress Report

The expansion of the public social services during the past few years has presented serious questions to those interested in the development of the profession of social work. Among them, the following have been discussed frequently: What preparation is needed by those who look to a career in the public field? What is the role which should be played by the schools of social work in the preparation of this personnel?

An attempt to provide some answer is represented by the Study of Education for the Public Social Services, undertaken by the American Association of Schools of Social Work with the aid of a special grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. To the members of the American Association of Social Workers who have followed the progress of this study since its inception in May 1938, the news that field work has been completed and that findings will soon be available will be welcome indeed.

As indicated earlier in THE COMPASS,[1] the project was approached from two points of view: (a) the study of personnel and training needs in the public social services and, (b) resources for the preparation of the personnel as represented in the schools of social work. With some modifications from time to time, the undertaking has followed the plan developed and approved by a small Study Committee, Robert T. Lansdale, New York School of Social Work, Chairman.[2] The study of the field needs was the responsibility of George C. S. Benson, Associate Professor of Public Administration, University of Michigan, and Dorothy C. Kahn, now Assistant Executive Secretary of the American Association of Social Workers, with some assistance from Robert T. Lansdale and Saul Bernstein, also of the New York School of Social Work. The study of educational resources was undertaken by the Executive Secretary of the American Association of Schools of Social Work. The entire enterprise has had the counsel of a General Advisory Committee, composed of representatives of a number of state and federal agencies, with Fred K. Hoehler, Director of the American Public Welfare Association as Chairman. For the members of the professional organization who have followed the progress of this study and especially for the many who have assisted the project in a variety of ways, a brief report of progress seems appropriate at this time.

In general accordance with the original plan, the study of personnel needs has been limited to Unemployment Compensation and the Employment Services, Old Age Insurance, Public Assistance, and Child Care. In each instance, the operating, supervisory and administrative levels of personnel were studied in an attempt to learn the nature and number of jobs, the skills and knowledge required, personnel requirements, salary standards, the sources of recruiting present personnel and special training problems existing in the services. Methods employed in field work which covered nine states completely and two states in part included the use of a check list of skills and knowledge, interviews and some job analysis.

A similar method was used in a brief study of the administration of Workmen's Compensation, which was added to the list of services to be studied because of its significance as the first type of social insurance in operation in this country. Likewise, some adaptation of the method was used in two coordinate studies by the United States Housing Authority and the American Association of Medical Social Workers respectively, to which a later reference will be made. Whether material from these supplementary studies will be separately issued or embodied in the general report has not yet been determined. But the methods employed have sufficient uniformity to permit a picture of the present career in these services, the skills and knowledge which seem to be required and the recruiting and training problems which have appeared. It goes without saying that problems differ from state to state even in those services which have federal leadership. Consequently generalization is hazardous, but the value of summarizing the characteristics of the forty-eight states is so great that the staff has prepared a composite account which brings together as for a "forty-ninth state" the problems and possibilities reviewed.

The Association has had the generous cooperation of the United States Housing Authority, which has made available the findings of a companion study of training needs in local housing management projects. Field work covering twelve projects was completed and the report prepared by Robert

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[1] THE COMPASS, February 1939.

[2] Other members are: Edith Abbott, Martha A. Chickering, Arthur Dunham, William Haber, Gordon Hamilton, Florence W. Hutsinpillar, Arlien Johnson, Margaret Johnson, Leila Kinney, Hertha Kraus, Margaret Leal, W. I. Newstetter, Karl de Schweinitz, Alice L. Shea, R. Clyde White, and Elizabeth Wisner.

Graham of the Management Review Division of the Housing Authority. This material brings together for the first time an actual picture of the personnel problems of local housing management and the conclusions will be more than helpful to those planning educational programs with housing careers in mind.

Likewise, a coordinate study undertaken by the American Association of Medical Social Workers with the cooperation of the American Public Welfare Association covering twenty public medical care programs in the country will be of great value in determining how to improve the preparation of medical social workers for medical care programs developing under public auspices. Field work was completed by Eleanor Hearon, of Colorado General Hospital, and Ella Weinfurther Reed, of the American Public Welfare Association. The report is being written by Dora Goldstine of the University of Chicago Clinics. The chief objective of this undertaking has been "to find out directly from those persons actually in the relatively new fields what they are attempting and what their functions might be that would aid in giving clients integrated treatment. The intent is that from the field work findings will issue a statement, a basis which may serve usefully both to public administrators and to medical social workers in further understanding and development of medical social work in the public programs of medical care. It is hoped that also it may contain material which will be serviceable in the professional education of those who are to become medical social workers in such programs and in the establishment of criteria by which personnel are chosen for the positions." [1]

The study of educational resources for the preparation of personnel for these services has included the thirty-eight schools of social work which were members of the American Association of Schools of Social Work 1938–1939 and a selected number of schools not now members but whose programs have been planned with membership in mind.[2] Questionnaires sent to the schools in October 1938 were followed by field visits to the schools throughout the academic year. Thirty-seven member schools and twenty-two non-member schools were visited during this period. Among the subjects to be covered in this aspect of the study are: trends in curriculum planning over a period of five years; the adaptation of curriculum content to the needs of the public social services; the scope of services for which the schools are actually preparing; plans for the future which indicate the point of view of the schools towards the public field; trends in the student body and efforts to recruit able students for the field; and the efforts of the schools to meet the particular problem of the employed social worker seeking further education on a part-time basis. The schools have been faced with some perplexing problems during the past few years of expansion in the public social services. Methods devised to meet the demand for additional field work resources and experiments with new emphases in some of the schools will be reviewed in order to reveal the dynamic role which the schools must play if they are to be effective in preparing young people for the profession of social work today.

Here too, the Association has been fortunate in the use it may make of a coordinate study of schools of public administration undertaken by George Graham, Professor of Public Administration, Princeton University. This study presumably limited to graduate schools of public administration in the various universities of the country will review the objectives and to some extent evaluate results which have been achieved by the efforts of these schools to provide a generalized preparation for public administration.

According to the present plan, the findings of the Association study will be submitted to the Study Committee at a meeting late in November. This report of findings for which the staff accepts responsibility will become the basis for recommendations to be formulated by the Committee for later presentation to the Advisory Committee and the Association. It is hoped that the general report will be published as soon as possible afterwards so that the material can be of immediate use to the various groups which have been interested in the undertaking. In the planning and the accomplishment of the project, many individuals and groups have shared. The federal agencies in the field, regional offices of the Social Security Board, state and local public welfare agencies, chapters and committees of the American Association of Social Workers, and many individuals have contributed greatly to whatever success may be achieved. And it is the earnest hope of the American Association of Schools of Social Work that among other findings it will be clear that only through

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[1] Report of the Committee on Medical Care in Community Health, AAMSW Bulletin, August 1939.

[2] The University of Cincinnati withdrew June 1939.

such inter-relationship of school and field can a sound program of professional education for the public social services be developed.

Marion Hathway, Executive Secretary,
American Association of Schools
of Social Work

Notes About Chapters

Recent developments in chapter administration show that progress is being made by chapters to establish resources which increasingly will strengthen their administration, provide continuous activity on program and facilitate membership efforts for program. In a number of chapters other than those mentioned below the question of the need for paid staff is coming up for increasing consideration. The chapters noted have different kinds of arrangements depending on their resources. Undoubtedly there will need to be further experimentation with the kinds of chapter staff arrangements which are feasible.

WITH the resignation of Mrs. Cherrie Baxter, the *Los Angeles County Chapter* starts out this autumn with a new office secretary, Mrs. Bess H. Mandel. The Chapter has an office and Mrs. Mandel is employed on a half time basis with responsibility for stenographic service to officers, routine committee correspondence, minutes of Executive Committee meetings and for maintenance of chapter files. As early as 1934 the Los Angeles County Chapter was discussing the possibility of paid chapter staff in the light of the increasing complexities of chapter affairs and programs which could not adequately be carried on by volunteer officers all of whom had full time jobs. The Chapter started out, in 1934, with a part time executive secretary, financing this service through special contributions and later a general increase in dues. The Chapter obtained an office without charge through the Family Welfare Association. In subsequent years institutes have been held, the receipts from which have helped in financing the part of the Chapter budget which is not covered by regular dues. The present arrangement of a part time office secretary rather than a professional secretary was begun in the fall of 1937 when the Chapter decided that with its limited resources a part time office secretary could be more profitably and effectively used than a part time executive secretary, particularly as the past executive secretaries had indicated that with lack of stenographic help a great deal of their time had to go into clerical work rather than to the development of the program and membership participation.

IN May 1939 the *Cincinnati Chapter* voted to appropriate $50 for clerical service and a permanent file for chapter material. The secretary-treasurer of the Chapter has general responsibility for the management of the office files. The Chapter views this action as the first step in centralizing materials so that they may be available to all members as well as for Chapter committee study and as a beginning recognition on the part of the membership of the need of paid assistance in administering the Chapter's affairs.

THROUGH an increase of dues in July 1938, the *Pittsburgh Chapter* has financed an office and a part time office secretary, Mrs. Gertrude Markle. Mrs. Markle is employed two days a week "to take care of the organization of our files, listing of our membership according to agency, . . . to give attention to chapter matters" and to be available for secretarial service to the chairman, corresponding secretary, and chairmen of the various divisions. The Chapter hopes that through this service the membership may be continuously informed as to what the Chapter as a whole is doing.

THE *New York City Chapter* is launching on its third year with a full time professional executive secretary, office secretary and office. As a basis for consideration of 1939 Delegate Conference resolutions, the Chapter spent a major portion of its time last year in analysis of its own purpose, structure and working relationships, including consideration of the executive secretary's role, which is now defined in the Chapter's statement of policies and procedures * as that of executive officer of the Chapter. The New York City Chapter first approached its financial problems through a system of voluntary contributions, and then by an increase in dues and a sliding scale of voluntary contributions to be made at the time of the regular dues payments. This arrangement, though helpful, left an operating deficit, so that in June of this year on the basis of the report of the

* See October 1939 COMPASS "For Reference and Committee Use."

Finance Committee, which suggested that "a predictable income to meet a minimum approved expense budget is an essential element in planning and executing an effective Chapter program," the Chapter approved an increase in dues from $10.00 per year to $11.60. This figure was arrived at by dividing the total amount necessary to carry on the services which the membership had already agreed were essential, by the number of members in the Chapter. Members are asked to make a voluntary contribution in addition to minimum dues and to indicate to which special projects not now covered in the minimum budget they wish especially to contribute. Mrs. Martha Perry has been executive secretary since October 1937 when the Chapter first started the present plan. May Husney, the office secretary, resigned as of October 15, 1939, and Mrs. Fay Plum is being employed in her place. Although starting out with one small office, the Chapter now has two rooms, one of which is adequate for committee meetings as well as for Mrs. Perry's office.

THE *San Francisco Chapter* continues for the second year with Carolyn White as the office secretary. This position was originally financed through a special lecture series. This year it was felt that the services of a part time office secretary were so advantageous that they should not be relinquished but that financing should be put on a sound basis. The Chapter Executive Committee's recommendation that the dues be raised to $10.00 a year to cover the budget was voted by the Chapter membership. The Chapter has its office in the Civic Auditorium in San Francisco.

THIS is the third year of the *Twin City Chapter's* employment of a part time executive secretary. Brenda Fischer is the new half-time executive secretary for 1939–40, replacing Mary Helen Merrill. Mrs. Norma Moe Olson was the first executive secretary of this Chapter from 1937–38, acting in this capacity during the time she was completing her work for her Master's degree at the University of Minnesota. At the time of deciding that paid staff was essential for management of the Chapter's affairs, the need for a workable financial plan was recognized and the Chapter raised its minimum dues to $10.00 a year for members, and $8.00 a year for junior members. The position of executive secretary is conceived as one of leadership in promoting the activities of the chapter, with responsibility for stimulating and organizing the work of the study sections, assisting standing committees, facilitating working relationships with other organizations, and generally helping to make the chapter valuable to all its members.

IN *Chicago,* the Chapter is just getting under way a plan to obtain for the Chapter an office and to employ a professional executive secretary and an office secretary. By matching a special grant through an increase in dues for this year, the Chapter has succeeded in obtaining an office and full time executive and office secretaries, and is at work now in defining these jobs and the employment conditions for them. An additional grant of $500 is providing office furnishings. Natalia Greensfelder is to be the executive secretary, Sara Hughes, the office secretary. To the Chapter this represents a long step in the direction of meeting the need for continuous attention to chapter administration and chapter program activities.

ALSO just getting under way is the *Philadelphia Chapter's* plan for a part time office secretary. During the last year the Philadelphia Chapter has had many discussions on what paid staff services would be desirable and practical. A special committee studied existing materials in the national office regarding chapter paid staffs and after full chapter discussion of the several different financial plans proposed by the special committee, the Chapter raised its dues to $10.00 per year (previously $8.50) to provide for the services of a part time office secretary and chapter office.

MRS. William Boyd is the new half time executive secretary of the *Cleveland Chapter,* replacing Mrs. Judith Wylie who resigned in July of this year. The Cleveland Chapter maintains an office and central files and also provides part time stenographic service for the executive secretary. The Cleveland Chapter members paid $9.00 dues from 1935 to 1937 and for the past two years have been paying $11.00 dues in order to finance this program.

CHICAGO CHAPTER ON THE AIR

The Chicago Chapter plans two programs on the radio series sponsored by the Social Work Publicity Council of Council of Social Agencies. The first chapter program will be heard early in November over the local outlet of the Columbia Broadcasting System, and will be devoted to a dramatic presentation of the relief situation in Chicago.

Personnel Amendment to the Social Security Act

The Division on Government and Social Work has been especially zealous in supporting amendments to the Social Security Act which would strengthen the personnel aspects of state administration of the assistance programs. The AASW therefore welcomes the fact that the Board has acquired authority to require the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards on a merit basis. It is reasonable to assume that the assistance programs can make a much better showing in the future. The Board now has authority with respect to the principal element in the state plan of operation, whereas it has previously been compelled to be technically inactive so far as personnel was concerned.

During the life of the Act many states have sought and used the influence of the Board in protecting sound programs. This influence has been diplomatically wielded by the Board in other states to save the administration of public assistance from becoming a political shambles under the law. There have been several states, however, which took full advantage of the lack of authority in regard to personnel policies and standards to let the bars down to low standards and political exploitation of staff and clientele.

There are still many trouble spots and new ones crop up each year in the process of developing public understanding of the necessity and the basis for sound administration of the programs.

Anticipating that even with its new mandate the Security Board may face many difficulties in exercising its authority, the AASW and chapters may find that their efforts can be usefully applied in backing the Security Board when its powers need to be invoked both to prevent pending breakdowns of administration programs and to correct some of the personnel situations which have grown up where adequate merit plans and protection have not been employed up to now.

Announcement of Examinations for Institutional Positions

The Department of Civil Service of the State of New York is announcing examinations for Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of State Training Schools.

The residence requirements have been waived for the position of Superintendent, the appointment for which is expected at the New York State Training School for Girls, although preference in certification will be given to legal residents of New York State. Qualifications required include seven years of satisfactory full time paid social work experience in a social agency or institution, three years of which must have been in an institution for juveniles, and three years of which must have been in an administrative or executive capacity, *plus* graduation from a recognized college or university from a four year course for which a bachelor's degree is granted, *supplemented by* one year of graduate study either in an approved school of social work *or* in a pertinent field in a recognized college or university. What will be accepted as a "pertinent field" is not indicated but it may be expected that professional social work training is especially desired. Substitution for these requirements is defined as "a satisfactory equivalent combination of the foregoing experience and education." The matter of equivalents for social work education and experience has not yet been determined.

Candidates for the position of Superintendent with appointment expected at the New York State Agricultural and Industrial School and for Assistant Superintendent at the New York State Training School for Girls are required to be legal residents of New York State. Qualification requirements are similar to those for Superintendent at the New York State Training School for Girls. For Assistant Superintendent five years of satisfactory full time paid social work or vocational guidance experience is required, of which one year must have been in an institution or agency for juveniles and two years must have been in a responsible supervisory or executive capacity, plus graduation from a recognized college or university from a four year course for which a bachelor's degree is granted or a satisfactory equivalent combination of this experience and education. Appointment as Superintendent is expected at $5,000 a year and maintenance; for Assistant Superintendent the usual range is from $3,120 to $3,870. Preferred age limits for the position of Superintendent are 30 to 50 years and for Assistant 25 to 45 years.

Formal announcement of these examinations has not yet been made but an application and announcement circular will be sent to any interested candidate upon request to the Department of Civil Service in Albany. The last date for filing of applications will probably be about the middle of November, the examination to be held early in December.

Material for Committee Study

Problems of Professional Performance and Ethical Eligibility occasionally arise in relation to endorsement by the chapters of individual applications for membership. Such questions are not frequent but their importance is not to be measured by their frequency. In various chapter and national connections there has been discussion of the need for the AASW to set up more effective safeguards against the admission to membership of persons who meet the technical qualifications but whose professional performance or ethical fitness may be open to question. The delicate nature of this question as it arises in the application of a particular individual has prevented the national membership administration and the National Membership Committee from getting the materials necessary to proper consideration of the kinds of problems involved in such cases or to study of the difficulties which chapters encounter in trying to handle them. Believing that the current program for study of problems related to the membership requirements should include this particular problem of "professional performance" or "ethical eligibility," Florence Sytz, Chairman of the National Membership Committee, requested the national office to send out to chapter chairmen a bulletin asking the chapters to cooperate with the National Membership Committee by making a preliminary review of their experience in this regard and reporting on it to the national office not later than January 1.

The material in this bulletin of October 7, 1939, is quoted below in order to give interested committees and members convenient access to the statement of the problem to which attention must be directed. The purpose of the bulletin was to suggest the sort of questions on which chapter reports would be helpful and also to describe the defects in the Association's present provisions for dealing with the ethically questionable candidate:

Information Desired from Chapters

The National Membership Committee would find useful any material which individual chapters can submit on the ethical questions which have come up in relation to endorsement of candidates. These questions may arise in relation to any phase of a candidate's professional performance (including in *professional performance* professional relationships to clients, the agency, colleagues and co-workers and the professional group).

Concrete details would be useful on:

The form in which the question about the performance or ethics of a candidate has arisen.

The degree to which the question seemed to be related to professional competence or understanding of professional principles, aims and methods.

Any difficulty which the chapter had in dealing with the question and the procedure used.

What possibility there seemed to be that the ethical problem might have been clarified for the individual in the course of attendance at a professional school or come to the attention of a school as evidence of the individual's possible unfitness for social work.

The Present Status

The Association's concern to safeguard professional interests from anti-professional or unethical behavior in its members is evidenced in Section 1, Article IV of the By-Laws, which reads:

> Membership in the American Association of Social Workers is open to men and women trained in social work who are or have been professionally concerned with problems of social organization and adjustment, and whose ethical standards of performance and character are in conformity with those of this Association.

In membership administration the only source of evidence on unethical or incompetent performance is the letters of reference. Letters of reference are not mentioned in the by-laws but until recently have always been required evidence. It is questionable how much reliance can be placed on references in view of all the subjective factors which are likely to be involved. In addition the present wording of Section 1 throws the burden of proof of ethical ineligibility upon the Association and in case of suit brought by an excluded person makes the position of the Association so much more difficult. The chapters usually go into the infrequent questionable case carefully in order to make a recommendation to the national membership administration but nevertheless the grounds for unfavorable action under the by-laws are very limited. Aside from such revision of Section 1 as would throw the burden of proving ethical eligibility on the applicant, there would seem to be two possible approaches to this problem:

1. To consider whether it is the responsibility of the AASW to pass on performance in practice before applicants are admitted to membership, and if so, what by-law amendments would be needed to carry out this responsibility, or

2. To consider whether the AASW should continue to place reliance primarily on professional education as the best guarantee of professional competence and professional attitude, and if so, what responsibility the schools should be asked to take for evaluation of the applicant's record to supplement the present routine reporting of credits.

The requirement of "credit" for courses and field work in the by-laws assumes satisfactory completion of work but complete reliance on professional education would necessitate a clearer understanding with the schools as to whether they feel that their standards for selecting students and permitting them to continue in the schools have reached a level where such reliance is feasible.

Regional Conferences in the Southwest and Plains States

Regional conferences of the Association's chapters in two parts of the country were repeated in October. The Southwestern Conference was held in Dallas October 14 and 15 and the Plains States Conference in Colorado Springs October 28 and 29.

Five chapters participated in the Southwestern Conference, each sending a number of representatives with a total registration of about 50. Arkansas and Oklahoma State Chapters and the North, South, and Southeast Texas Chapters took part. Mrs. W. P. McDermott of Arkansas was chairman of the Conference. Arthur Morehead of the South Texas Chapter was associated with her in program preparation.

Pooling of experiences in using the chapter as an instrument for developing the needed programs of the several chapters; problems of adapting the selected membership organization to programs which include large numbers of workers without professional education; principles and methods of influencing public opinion concerning existing needs and appropriate social resources, were the principal subjects of round table discussion during the meeting. Margaret Yates of Fort Worth contributed a paper on "The AASW and the Community."

Members voted to hold the third annual conference next year and elected Mrs. Irene Farnham Conrad of Texas, Chairman; Mrs. Rosebud V. Savage of Oklahoma, Vice-Chairman, and Mrs. Margaret Letzig of Arkansas, Secretary.

Chapters in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, Arizona and Montana, the new Central Missouri Chapter, as well as members in Wyoming were invited to the Plains States Conference at Colorado Springs. Alice E. Van Diest of the Colorado Springs Chapter was chairman of the conference committee on arrangements. It is the third annual regional conference of the Plains States chapters.

Special efforts were made to adapt the program to the concerns of members outside of the major urban centers of states involved.

Walter West, Executive Secretary, attended both regional conferences, and has visited a number of chapters during the past month. He also attended the Nebraska and Oklahoma State Conferences. The latter was organized and sponsored by the Oklahoma Chapter. From this chapter sponsorship a full fledged conference organization has been launched, for the first time in that State.

NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER ACTS ON WPA

From the *New York Times,* July 31: "The American Association of Social Workers, New York City Chapter, in a memorandum to the Senate and House Committees and to New York members of Congress, urged support of amendments designed to remedy 'unsound' provisions of the recent Relief Act."

The Chapter's memorandum, five paragraphs of which the *Times* quoted verbatim, was released after Executive Committee discussion. It pointed out that the Act's treatment of federal participation in unemployment relief without consideration of the needs and capacities of localities is its basic defect; that the reduction of appropriations for work relief is unsupported by credible evidence of a corresponding reduction in the number of workers for whom jobs or relief must be provided; that the limitation of employment quotas, the reduction in security wages, and the arbitrary provision for periodic layoffs will cause increases in the local burden of relief costs beyond available resources; that provision for periodic reinvestigation is sound in any type of relief but inconsistent with a reduction in the amount available for administrative expense; that the eighteen months lay-off provision is unrelated to an individual's need for relief and to the length of time during which work relief will be beneficial to the worker and to the community.

Chapters Assisting in Food Stamp Study

On October 9 a bulletin was sent to Chapters inquiring whether appropriate committees would undertake to assist in the study jointly undertaken by the AASW, American Public Welfare Association and Russell Sage Foundation. Outlines were submitted as guides for study in areas where the plan is already in operation and also in places where surplus commodities are now distributed in other ways.

The Oklahoma State Chapter has already submitted a preliminary report on the experiment in selling stamps to low income families. This and other reports will be summarized next month.

FIELD WORK FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS

(Continued from page 9)

upon the caseload should be kept constant. In actual practice, however, this is far from the real situation. To mention only a few of the factors which are completely, or at best only partially, uncontrolled, visitors vary in ability and experience; the make-up of caseloads varies with nationality, family size, economic background, etc.; forms are filled out by visitors with differing degrees of completeness and accuracy; districts lack uniformity of size and distance from home office, etc. Not only must the student realize that in spite of such variations, valuable conclusions may ultimately be drawn, but he must also reconcile himself to the fact that the conduct of this experiment is far from the sole concern of the entire organization. The actual reports of the visitors' activities may even be largely in the form of routine agency forms, from which the statistical staff will abstract the data which are relevant to the study. Not even at the stage when the information reaches the research department is the student's disillusionment complete. When the raw data are at hand, there seem to be many tempting possibilities of inter-related tables, correlations, graphs and charts, in addition to interesting and informative qualitative summaries drawn from the visitors' and supervisors' reports. Of this wealth of material—truly a statistician's paradise—only a seemingly meagre selection is made of those facts bearing most directly on the central theme, while his statistician's appetite is unappeased by the few uncomplicated tables and at most one or two simple line graphs or bar charts. The study is probably being prepared for distribution to agency staff, board members, or for release to the general public, an audience vitally interested in the subject matter and conclusions of the study, but generally indifferent to involved statistical presentations. Thus it is brought home to the student that administrative and social research in a welfare agency, while sharing with pure empirical research the same fundamental concepts and aims, is strikingly different in execution, due to the compulsion upon it to conform to the agency's particular requirement and due to the fact that its major function is assistance in and solution of administrative problems. This is equally true in the case of brief surveys on administrative problems, and in the long-range studies which serve as bases for major policy formulations.

The task of the supervisor of the field work of research students is not a simple one of instruction or evaluation. It involves, at the least, four general problems, which may be indicated as follows. First, and foremost, he must determine whether the student is the stuff of which a research worker can be made. This decision is not to be reached overnight or without prolonged observation of the student's reactions under many and varying situations. It will be based, not upon any measurable or even tangible estimate, but rather upon the recognition of the student's ability to formulate methods of attacking a problem, to devise practical and workable experimental procedures, to interpret in searching and thoughtful fashion the significance of summarized data, and to demonstrate a self-disciplined honesty in the use and dissemination of figures. Second, he must ascertain whether the student is capable of functioning adequately in diametrically opposite situations, namely, under direct supervision, and on the other hand, with complete freedom to chart his own course and at the same time, undertake the direction of other individuals. Third, he must determine whether, after a reasonable interval for observation and learning, the student has thoroughly familiarized himself with the field of his research—with the policies and administrative procedures of the agency, and particularly with the broader implications inherent in the interaction between the agency, the community, and the entire field. Finally, he must find out whether the student is in command of the tools of statistical research—mathematical methods, principles, and formulae. If the student has shown capabilities in the first three directions indicated, this last proficiency, if temporarily inadequate, should certainly be acquired.

Let us now make the foregoing points clearer by reference to specific examples in our experience. The reaction of a student who came to the research department of the Philadelphia Public Assistance agency for his field work, will serve to illustrate the problems besetting the supervisor in his difficult decision as to whether research will prove the true metier of the student. His first research assignment was to take part in a purely statistical study of the lapse of time intervening between the date of the first contact with an applicant and the date of approval or rejection of the application. The reasons for the study were made clear to the student—it was pointed out to him how the variations between the figures for the separate districts might be of significance in revealing hitherto

unrecognized atypical procedures, how the agency figures might disclose an unnecessary lag at a certain point in the application procedures, etc., etc. He was asked to accept the proposition that routine administrative studies are an essential part of any program, and that in many instances, it is not beneath the dignity of the research director to exercise meticulous care in the performance of these basic tasks. Nevertheless, it soon became evident that the student was chafing under the conviction that he was wasting his valuable capabilities on an elementary job of dubious importance. He became more and more vocal in his expression of the belief that the department might far better be engaged in preparing a really worthwhile dissertation on "The general causes and effects of the depression." Now, this was a critical point in the intellectual development of the student as well as a crucial test of his future worth as a research worker. If he could not be brought to see the value of the bit of research, limited in its scope but of immediate practical value to the agency, as well as the futility of attempting to solve the problems of the age with a six page thesis, his choice of a career might better be altered then and there.

A further illustration may be offered to show another type of adjustment which might become a critical test of the student's developing research skill. Striking out independently on a study of unemployment in the city one of our students was thrown completely out of his stride by the discovery that certain data on the subject, not only were not at present available, but had never been assembled. To him it was a distressing and incredible fact that such a vital issue of the day as unemployment should not be tabulated and documented in great detail for every community and by frequent and regular time intervals. The student's ability to restate his problem and to reorganize his material in such manner as to conform to and make full use of whatever data were available, and not at the time to require nonexistent information, was a vital test of his adaptability to the methods of research.

The second qualification needed by the research student—the capacity to accept supervision and yet be able to work independently when occasion demands—has proved the stumbling block for many young workers. Any teacher or administrator is familiar with the type of student who, when given a specific task to perform does not take time to do more than recognize the field of the inquiry, before he desires to point out the shortcomings of the method employed, the inadequacy of the data, and the general futility of the problem. In so doing, he feels that he has given proof of his wide acquaintance with the subject and his superior critical ability. The wise supervisor recognizes this for what it is and conducts himself according to his individual capacity for restraint.

A student just entering upon his field work in our department was called upon to tabulate the data from schedules giving citizenship status of relief cases—a survey undertaken overnight in order to supply certain information to the Legislature in accordance with a special resolution. His first reaction—without ascertaining the purpose and the limitations set for the study—was immediately to criticize the schedules—"Why was not nationality indicated? the reason for failure to apply for citizenship? the length of time in this country?" Then—"Why did we not insist on the visitors filling in *all* of the information on the forms? Why didn't all of the schedules reach the statistical office at the same time to expedite the tabulations?" And finally "Why wasn't all this information in our files? Why hadn't the visitors checked up on this situation long ago?" That submission to established circumstances is not incompatible with an objectively critical attitude is an important lesson for the research student to learn. No less vital an achievement is the development of independence when the situation demands such an assumption of responsibility. Too complete a reliance upon authority would eventually prove disastrous to a research career, and the student should be encouraged from the very beginning to function autonomously within an ever-widening sphere of action. Moreover, as his technical capacity and his acquaintance with agency procedures develops, he should be called upon to undertake the direction of other persons in the performance of research activities. His ability to cooperate productively and to supervise clearly, fairly and creatively provides another criterion for evaluating the student's work and for hazarding a prognosis as to his ultimate success.

Our final propositions should, by now, be fairly obvious—namely, that if a student is to be trained for research in the welfare field, a detailed familiarity with its background, functions, policies and practices constitutes as important a part of his mental equipment, as does his detailed knowledge of statistical methods. It is, however, widely assumed that if a research worker knows how to compute his medians, modes, M.D.'s and moving averages, he can apply this knowledge

wherever it may be needed and thus make short work of the agency's statistical problems. This is, perhaps unfortunately, far from the truth. A research worker is of value to the administrator in proportion to his capacity to subordinate his statistical routines and adapt them to the exigencies of various situations. In speaking of the statistician's role in the social agency, Edwin B. Wilson [1] puts this issue very clearly. "In this methodological no-man's land, the statistician must do the best he can. He may have to develop a new technique; in that case he has two chief reliances, first and foremost a sound and wide acquaintance with the field of activity in which he has to operate, and second a good mathematical background, because it is from that, that all techniques are developed; but if the choice must be made between the familiarity with his subject and familiarity with mathematics, I should unhesitatingly prefer the former."

May I now, in closing, reiterate that our hope for a future generation of trained research workers in the social field depends largely upon the present readiness of public welfare agencies to cooperate with the universities, and more particularly with the schools for social work, in providing supervised field training for students. In so far as this coordination of functions can be developed between the school and the agency, to this extent will the student receive a broad and thorough training that will adequately prepare him for active and capable participation in our fields.

American Social Workers in Service Abroad

While the list is by no means complete, information has been received from the International Migration Service, American Friends Service Committee and National Refugee Service indicating that the following American social workers are or were this summer engaged in service abroad:

International Migration Service

Mary Hurlbutt
Ruth Larned

National Refugee Service

Elinor Blackman

American Friends Service Committee

1. Engaged in German Refugee work:

Homer L. Morris and Edna Morris
Howard W. Elkinton
Elizabeth Shipley
Marguerite Pohek
Florence L. Cook
Alice Shaffer
Mary R. Champney
Joseph Conard

2. Engaged in Spanish Refugee work:

Howard E. Kershner
Gertrude Kershner
Paul Bowman
Florence Conard
Alfred and Norma Jacob
Aldis and Cora Easterling
Ernest Bennett
Wilbert Nafziger
Lester Hershey

These persons have been able to convey to the social workers of other countries the deep concern of social workers in America, and they speak with admiration of the courageous, calm and intelligent planning of fellow-workers in foreign lands.

SPECIAL MEMBER LIST

In the spring of 1938 a plan for a special member list was introduced in connection with the establishment of certain restrictions on reinstatement and resignations.*

This provision allows the Association to waive a member's annual dues when difficulty in meeting the payment is due to full time attendance at a school of social work for one academic year; illness, or unemployment, for from six months to one year.

It is believed that the results of this special arrangement during the last year would be of interest to members. The following table shows the number of such transfers since October 1938 and the reasons therefor.

	Full time attendance at a school of soc. work	Illness	Unemployment	Total
October 1938.....	6	2	1	9
November 1938...	2	8	—	10
December 1938...	2	1	1	4
January 1939.....	1	4	—	5
February 1939....	2	2	1	5
March 1939.....	5	4	1	10
April 1939.....	4	4	—	8
May 1939.....	2	4	1	7
June 1939.....	2	1	1	4
July 1939.....	2	2	—	4
August 1939.....	8	7	3	18
	36	39	9	84

[1] *Colophon* in "Statistics in Social Studies" by Stuart A. Rice—prepared for the Committee on Social Statistics of the American Statistical Association, 1930.

* See July–August 1938 COMPASS.

Proposals for Research on Relief Problems

Very timely and significant is the memorandum, "Suggestions for Research on Problem of Relief," recently issued by Paul Webbink, Director of the Committee on Social Security of the Social Science Research Council. The tenth year of large scale relief operations will be completed in 1939, with every indication that public assistance in this country will continue to be a primary social problem for many years to come. Stock-taking with respect to research on relief problems is now definitely in order. In spite of considerable literature on the subject of relief, there are few publications of a fundamental research nature. It is important that vital issues in the future should not have to be resolved without the aid of careful and objective research. To this end, problems for extended study are suggested, with general indications as to the type of personnel and the time required. No attempt is made to cover the entire field, but rather to place emphasis upon problems which may be attacked without extensive field work or collection of new data.

Illustrative of the wide range of topics outlined are the following: the influence of relief and WPA policies on the labor market; employability and unemployability; migration and resettlement; regional studies of urban and rural relief. Under each heading is a short discussion of the significance of the problem, with a brief excursion into its history and the factors which contributed to its existence. Then follow more detailed descriptions of the scope of possible research and specific suggestions as to sub-headings or minor studies. Principal sources of data are indicated, as are also the extent of the field to be covered, e.g. national, state, city; the type of training and experience needed by the person in charge, and the approximate minimum of time required for completion.

It is relevant here to note that many aspects of the relief question are at present less defined and more in need of clarification than at any previous period. Practices in different parts of the country are so various, interpretations of familiar terms so heterogeneous, and misconceptions so abounding, that any move toward coordination of thought is a definite step in the right direction. Thus, for example, no reliable information has been summarized with respect to the economic and social make-up of the relief population, although much has been written erroneously on this subject in the popular vein. Again, the constantly used comparison between the terms "employable" and "unemployable" may, under critical examination, prove fallacious, since their significances are so subject to qualifications as to vitiate the distinction. A final example: principles governing eligibility for assistance have varied so widely even in the same community over a period of years with changing concepts and availability of funds, and theory and practice are still so different throughout the country, that anyone desiring a general evaluation of the contemporary philosophy of relief would, with the present dearth of collected data, be genuinely at a loss.

Mr. Webbink's outline should prove of great value in that it not only throws the searchlight of objective criticism on the disorganized and incomplete status of research in relief problems at the present time, but also points the way to a planned and systematic approach in the future. It calls for cooperative activity, with the Committee on Social Security as a coordinating body, capable of assisting with source material, guidance in the selection of suitable projects, and avoidance of duplication in research problems. Graduate students in social economics might well profit by these suggestions in making a wise selection of thesis subjects and produce real contributions instead of mere academic dissertations. Welfare agencies might be guided to take thought regarding the real value of their studies, many of which in the past have been of purely local interest and of only passing significance. It is true that the average agency, at the present time, is functioning under the handicap of insufficient personnel, inadequately trained. Frequently, it would be impossible to release from administrative duties enough persons of the calibre and experience needed to conduct studies of wide scope, without crippling the regular functions. It is exceedingly possible, however, that under unified skillful guidance as offered by the Committee, various local regional studies might be made, which, when brought together, would constitute a body of data of far reaching importance in the shaping of relief policies on a state or even a national basis.

Saya S. Schwartz,
Philadelphia, Pa.